

## REMARKS

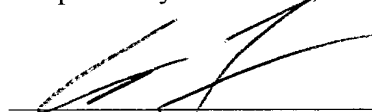
The claims are amended.

The 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejections are moot.

The Examiner inquires whether the metal halide can be any metal halide and whether the alkali metal salt fed by the extruder must be the same as the metal salt contacted with the reaction product. The claims are clear that the metal halide and the alkali metal salts are selected such that the product contains a salt melt of formula (I). Additionally, the claim does not require the salt fed to the extruder and the salt contacted with the reaction product to be identical, note each being defined as "an alkali metal salt" (emphasis added), but they can be the same as in the Example.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted



Csaba Henter, Reg. No. 50,908  
Anthony J. Zelano, Reg. No. 27,969  
Attorneys for Applicants  
MILLEN, WHITE, ZELANO & BRANIGAN, P.C.  
Arlington Courthouse Plaza 1  
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1400  
Arlington, VA 22201  
Direct Dial: 703-812-5331  
Facsimile: 703-243-6410  
Email: henter@mwzb.com

FILED: January 27, 2004

K:\Merck\2257\Reply Dec 03.doc